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ABSTRACT

In 1992, the Leon County School District in Tallahassee (Florida) began a review process to select a new norm-referenced test. The selection process was efficient and functional, and may be of interest to other school districts. Consideration was given to a variety of sources through the following process steps: (1) establish the norm-referenced test steering committee; (2) establish the process for test review and selection, objectives for the testing, and criteria for test selection; (3) conduct a technical and preliminary test review; (4) conduct a content review for critical curriculum match; (5) review presentations by publishers; (6) provide service documentation from users and publishers' negotiations; and (7) produce a final recommendation, pilot and phase-in plan, and teacher review of final selection. Evaluations by Steering Committee members confirm that the selection process was effective, fair, and efficient. Five appendixes contain summaries of objectives, criteria, and the process; a test review rating chart; and the curriculum/test match worksheet. (SLD)

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A Model for Review and Selection of Tests for School District Use

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Division of Information Services
Leon County Schools

In 1992, the Leon County School District in Tallahassee, Florida, began a review process to select a new norm-referenced test. The process proved efficient and functional and may be of interest to other public school districts anticipating test adoptions.

In designing a review model and recognizing that our ultimate objective was the selection of a test which would best meet the needs of Leon County Schools, consideration was given to the inclusion of input and direction from a variety of sources. This was accomplished through:

Step #1. Establish the Norm-Referenced Test Steering Committee. Central to the entire process was the establishment of a Steering Committee. The committee was composed of representatives of key groups across district divisions and levels--school and administrative. This group served as a guiding force throughout the process and met at critical points during the review to discuss issues, problems, concerns, direction, status, and recommendations.

Once the committee was established, personnel of the Department of Student Assessment and Database Reporting developed a model for review and selection of a new test, including selection criteria and our (local) objectives for norm-referenced testing. This work met the requirements of:

Step #2. Establish the Process for Test Review and Selection, the Objectives for Norm-Referenced Testing, and the Criteria for Test Selection. Drafts of these documents were shared with the Steering Committee. Using their input, the documents were revised and finalized (see Appendices 1, 2, and 3). These documents shaped the process by providing a framework within which to work as well as important conceptual fundamentals around which decisions regarding elimination or acceptance were made.

With the establishment of the committee, the model, the criteria, and the objectives, several tests in the review pool were eliminated (for example, those with norms which were three years old or older).

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In order to determine which tests were of high technical quality (item #1. on list of criteria), we began:

Step #3. Technical and Preliminary Test Review. An external consultant was hired by Leon County Schools to conduct a technical review based on certain prescribed parameters set forth by the school district (i.e., based on the AERA/APA/NCME Standards for Educational and Psychological Testing and was to consider Leon County Schools' Objectives for Nationally-normed Testing). Briefly, once the review was conducted, publishers were asked to respond to any rating other than "adequate"--those marked "questionable," "inadequate," or left blank because insufficient information was provided. Those items were then re-evaluated for possible rating changes. This "second round" was included in the event that information was missing from the review sets or was misinterpreted by our consultant. Our intent, then, was to be as fair as possible and allow publishers to "defend" their tests on specific technical qualities set forth through our descriptive specifications. Additionally, our consultant participated in an interactive capacity throughout the remaining portion of the review to answer questions and provide information from a technical perspective.

Following the preliminary and technical reviews, all but four tests (the most current from the four major vendors) were eliminated, only to be revisited if none of the remaining tests were able to meet Leon County Schools' remaining criteria.

Although we realize that "national" norm-referenced tests purport to sample from a "national" curriculum, it was important to us to consider how well each test "fit" our own curriculum. This was addressed in:

Step #4. Content Review for Critical Curriculum Match. Elementary and secondary teachers representing major curriculum areas (reading/language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, Chapter 1, and Exceptional Student Education) and district curriculum coordinators were provided test materials and district curriculum frameworks to review for recommendations of which test provided the best "fit" to our district curriculum. Review forms were completed and used as a basis for summary and discussion (see Appendices 4 and 5). As a follow-up, and again for the sake of fairness in the event of a "fatal" problem, publishers were invited back for a question and answer session with teacher representatives and curriculum coordinators. Following the question and answer sessions, teachers' recommendations for best fit were finalized.

All areas of our criteria for selection which were not addressed in the curriculum match were addressed in:

Step #5. Publishers' Presentations. Each of the four publishers provided two-hour presentations to the steering committee. Publishers were notified in advance of the Objectives for Testing, the Criteria for Test Selection, and the specific criteria upon which their presentations should focus (see Appendix 6). Committee members were provided review forms (see Appendix 7) which were completed and used as a basis for discussion, summary, and recommendation following the presentations. Based on committee findings, three tests were carried forward for further study at this point.

Prior to a final recommendation (and in order to have more "room" to negotiate with publishers), we addressed business issues such as service reliability and responsiveness and cost via:

Step #6. Service Documentation from Users; Publisher Negotiations. As the process began to move toward a final recommendation, data was collected from product users and specific cost and materials proposals were requested of publishers.

These findings, in addition to all previously gathered information, were presented to and discussed by the Steering Committee to help the committee come to:

Step #7. Final Recommendation; Pilot/Phase-In Plan; Teacher Review of Final Selection; Implementation. Based on the Steering Committee's recommendation, a proposal for an adoption, including a pilot/phase-in plan, was presented to appropriate district decision makers. Following approval, a plan to provide inservice to teachers regarding the new test was put in place. A combination of methods was used including on-site visitations to individual schools, multiple presentations at a single site on a district-wide inservice day, and video airing through our school district's instructional television network.

Schools have been encouraged to work closely with parents and have provided their own presentations to parents as well as inviting district personnel to make presentations to parent groups.

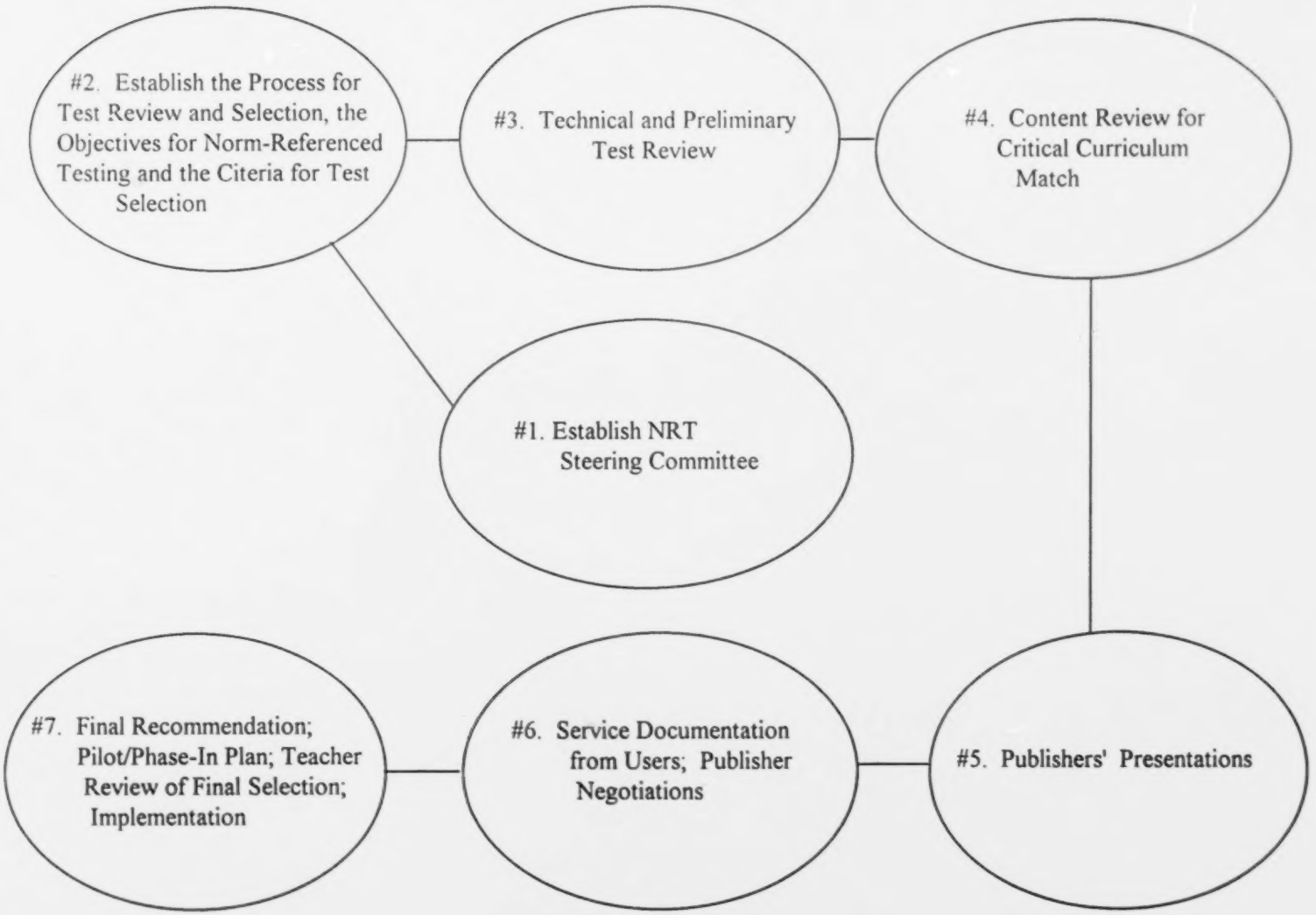
The actual test implementation process is currently in progress.

Leon County drew from a number of data sources in designing and implementing the review process. Most heavily utilized were revised review procedures from other school districts such as those from Hillsborough County, Orange County (both in Florida) and former Leon County review processes.

In conclusion, and based on evaluations from Steering Committee members (representing critical areas affected by norm-referenced testing), it was felt that the process was an effective, fair, and efficient one. By sharing this model, it is hoped that knowledge of Leon County's successful implementation of this model may assist others anticipating test adoptions.

Nationally-Normed Test Review & Selection Process

Leon County Schools


#2. Establish the Process for Test Review and Selection, the Objectives for Norm-Referenced Testing and the Citeria for Test Selection
#3. Technical and Preliminary Test Review
#4. Content Review for Critical Curriculum Match
#1. Establish NRT Steering Committee
#7. Final Recommendation; Pilot/Phase-In Plan; Teacher Review of Final Selection; Implementation
#6. Service Documentation from Users; Publisher Negotiations
#5. Publishers' Presentations

Appendix 1

Leon County Schools

Objectives for Nationally-Normed Testing
(Why are we testing?)

Leon County Schools' nationally-normed testing should:

1. assess student achievement of objectives which are considered to be representative of a "nationally common" curriculum;

2. provide a valid and reliable basis for assessing relatively low to high levels of achievement based on national norms;

3. provide a continuous and comparable longitudinal assessment structure to assess growth of individual students or groups of students from grade to grade and from level to level (i.e., from elementary to middle or middle to high school) through the use of a single achievement test;

4. provide information to help screen (for selection), monitor, and evaluate various educational programs, projects, and curricula;

5. provide achievement level feedback to students, parents, teachers, instructional program leaders, the State Department of Education, the media, and the community as a whole;

6. screen individual achievement/aptitude relative to special, remedial, and/or advanced instructional group placements and course scheduling.

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Criteria for Nationally-Normed Test Selection

To be considered for adoption in Leon County, a nationally-normed test must:

1. be of high technical quality in terms of APA/AERA/NCME standards for tests;

2. be non-biased in terms of sex, or racial/ethnic references;

3. be normed on a recent national sample of students (as defined by the NRT Steering Committee);

4. have sufficient sub-test depth to allow a reasonable progression of percentiles (i.e., one raw score point doesn't cause the corresponding national percentile to jump +/- 15 to 20 points);

5. be constructed in such a way as to reduce ceiling and floor effects which greatly inhibit a test's usefulness in discriminating upper and lower achieving students;

6. provide sub-test (content) coverage in reading, language, and mathematics;

7. be matched as closely as possible to Leon County Schools' curriculum in critical areas as determined by executive directors;

8. include an aptitude test which will generage anticipated achievement scores;

9. generate useable score types (national percentiles, standard scores, grade equivalents, normal curve equivalents, local percentiles) and useable summary information (means, medians, standard deviations, distributions, quartile summaries) which are derived in a technically sound and locally acceptable manner in report formats which are easy to read and interpret;

10. allow for optional local scoring at no extra cost to the district other than purchasing of norms (including interpolated norms);

11. be relatively easy to administer (within reasonable time constraints) and provide support materials which assist in test administration and interpretation (complete manuals, norms --including interpolated norms, technical manuals, etc.);

12. be of reasonable cost and be constructed of durable (reuseable) materials;

13. be backed by reputable, reliable, responsive company/publisher willing to provide support and assistance on request.

STANDARDIZED TEST REVIEW RATING CHART

Rater's Name _____

Position _____

Portions Reviewed

Test Name _____ Reading/L.A._____

Test Level _____ Mathematics _____

Grades Covered _____ Other _____

KEY:

0 - Poor/nonexistent/inappropriate
1 - Weak/somewhat inappropriate
2 - Adequate/appropriate
3 - Good/very appropriate

Test Content Subtests	(A) Fill in if Diff. Name	(B) Cognitive Domain	(C) Item-Match W/Curric.	(D) Extent Curr Cov	(E) Reada-bility	(F) Clarity	Comments*
Vocabulary Reading Comp. _____ _____	_____ _____ _____ _____	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	
(1) Total Reading		0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	
Spelling Grammar Capit/Punctuation	_____ _____ _____	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	
(2) Total Language		0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	
Computation Concepts Problem Solving	_____ _____ _____	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	
(3) Total Math		0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	
(4) Science	_____	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	
(5) Social Studies	_____	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	
Others (1)_____ (2)_____ (3)_____	_____ _____ _____	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3 0 1 2 3	

*Additional Comments:

STANDARDIZED TEST REVIEW FORM
Leon County Schools

GENERAL DIRECTIONS:

1. All information requested at the top of each form should be completed before starting the review process.

2. Subtests: This column contains the names of subtests commonly found in standardized achievements tests. The subtests are grouped by major areas:
   Total Reading (1)
   Total Language (2)
   Total Mathematics (3)
   If other or additional subtests exist, please list each at the bottom in the area labeled "other". Assign the area 1, 2, or 3 and write the title of the subtest.

TEST CONTENT:

Test content should be reviewed according to how well it matches Leon County Schools' curriculum. Each test should be reviewed in relation to corresponding grade level.

A. Complete if Different Name: This column is to be completed only if the name of the subtest is different form the name given in the first column but the subtest meaning has not changed (i.e., "Vocabulary" could be listed as "Word Knowledge"). NOTE: lines are given below subtest names for additional subtest areas.

B. Sampling of Cognitive Domain: This column deals with the levels at which items measure the concepts covered in the test. For example, are all items asking the student to recall facts or are the students asked to apply or synthesize information? (Refer to Bloom's Taxonomy of the Cognitive Domain.) For a good rating in this column, higher as well as lower levels should be represented.

C. Item-Match With Curriculum: This column deals with the extent to which the items are consistent with the curriculum. Is the content of the item normally taught in that grade in Leon County Schools?

D. Extent of Curriculum Coverage: This column deals with whether the items represent the range of the curriculum continuum within the grades the test purports to measure. This is different than the item-match in that every item could be included in the curriculum and yet not cover the breadth of the curriculum continuum.

E. Readability of Items for Grade(s) Covered: This column deals with whether the items are written at a level students will understand. Are the words used and sentence construction too difficult, too easy for the majority of the students?

F. Item Clarity: This column deals with whether the student understands what the item is asking the student to do. In addition, each multiple choice item should contain distractors which are plausible answers.

Rater's Name_____ Page_____ of_____

Curriculum/Test Match Worksheet

TEST_____ **FORM**_____

CURRICULUM AREA_____ **GRADE**_____

Curriculum Outline		Test Content Outline	
Major Objectives	Minor Objectives	Major Objectives	Minor Objectives
_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____		_____
	_____		_____
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	_____		_____
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_____	_____	_____	_____
	_____		_____
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	_____		_____
	_____		_____

PRELIMINARY DRAFT
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Norm Referenced Testing Review Process
Publishers' Presentations: Objectives & Issues

Objective: To provide additional information to the norm-referenced testing steering committee which will promote their informed decision-making regarding the further study of or elimination of applicable tests as part of the review and selection process.

Issues/items to be addressed by publishers' in their presentations:

According to Leon County Schools' criteria for nationally-normed test selection, a nationally-normed test/publisher must:

1. have sufficient sub-test depth to allow a reasonable progression of percentiles (i.e., one raw score point doesn't cause the corresponding national percentile to jump +/- 15 to 20 points).

2. be constructed in such a way as to reduce ceiling and floor effects which may inhibit a test's usefulness in discriminating upper- and lower-achieving students.

3. be matched as closely as possible to Leon County Schools' curricula in critical areas. (Representatives of the curriculum review team will present their findings to the publishers, ask questions, and allow for defense and/or rebuttal.)

4. be relatively easy to administer (in terms of format and administration procedures) within reasonable time constraints and provide support materials which assist in test administration and interpretation (complete manuals, norms -- including interpolated norms, technical manuals, etc.).

5. provide written commitment to the district stipulating the company's agreement to make whatever arrangements are necessary to allow for local scoring with Testmate.

6. provide written commitment to provide support and assistance (from publisher/consultant) in a timely and appropriate manner.

7. provide written commitment for flexible, pro-rated payment schedule (possibly over three years) covering initial test purchase.

Publishers are directed to focus on these points during their presentations, to provide backup materials which document their statements, and to provide rebuttal when questioned.

Worksheets will be provided for meeting participants to use in rating publishers across each of the respective areas.

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Appendix 7

STANDARDIZED TEST REVIEW RATING CHART

Rater's Name _____
Position _____

Portions Reviewed

Test Name _____ Reading/L.A._____
Test Level _____ Mathematics _____
Grades Covered _____ Other _____

KEY:

0 - Poor/nonexistent/inappropriate
1 - Weak/somewhat inappropriate
2 - Adequate/appropriate
3 - Good/very appropriate

Test Content Subtests	(A) Format: Color/ Illustrat	(B) Format: Print Size Item Layout	(C) Directions: Student	(D) Directions: Teacher Test Admin	(E) Subtest Depth	(F) Reduced Floor/Ceiling Effects	(G) Preparation for Testmate	(H) Written Service Commitment	(I) Flexible Payment Schedule
Vocabulary	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Reading Comp.	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
_____	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
_____	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
(1) Total Reading	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Spelling	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Grammar	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Capit/Punctuation	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
(2) Total Language	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Computation	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Concepts	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Problem Solving	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
(3) Total Mathematics	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
(4) Science	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
(5) Social Studies	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
Others									
(1)_____	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
(2)_____	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3
(3)_____	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3	0 1 2 3

*Comments:

STANDARDIZED TEST REVIEW FORM
Leon County Schools

GENERAL DIRECTIONS:

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   Total Reading (1)
   Total Language (2)
   Total Mathematics (3)
   If other or additional subtests exist, please list each at the bottom in the area labeled "other". Assign the area 1, 2, or 3 and write the title of the subtest.

RATING CRITERIA:

A. Format: Color/Illustrations:
Color - Is print color acceptable or distracting to the student?
Illustrations - Are illustrations appropriate and clear? Do they add to the students' understanding or do they distract the student?

B. Format: Print Size/Item Layout:
Print size - Is the print size (for both Items and Directions) appropriate for the grade(s) tested?
Item Layout - Are the items arranged in a logical, easy-to-follow layout? Are items spaced appropriately (not too crowded)?

C. Directions: For Student:
Clarity of Directions - Are the directions written so that they are clear in terms of what is expected?
Sample Items - Are sample items appropriate and clearly written?

D. Directions: For Teacher/Test Administrator:
Clarity of Administration - Are directions for teachers/test administrators clearly written and easy to understand and follow?
Information in Manuals - Does the manual adequately and usefully explain subtests, score interpretations, norms, etc.?

E. Subtest Depth:
Do tests have sufficient depth to allow a reasonable progression of percentiles (i.e., one raw score point doesn't cause the corresponding national percentile to jump +/- 15 to 20 points)?

F. Reduced Floor and Ceiling Effects:
Is there a sufficient number of relatively easy and difficult items to discriminate between the lowest and highest achieving students?

G. Preparation for Testmate:
Has the publisher provided written commitment to make whatever arrangements are necessary to allow for local scoring with Testmate? Does the commitment include a timeline?

H. Written Service Commitment:
Has the publisher provided written commitment to service? How thorough? How responsive?

I. Flexible Payment Schedule:
Has the publisher provided written commitment for a flexible initial-purchase payment schedule? How flexible?